

Olympic Peninsula Bed and Breakfast Association Travel Planner

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The Olympic Peninsula

Grays Harbor Guide

Come bask in the glory of the Pacific Ocean. Grays Harbor County, a natural wonder along the coast, brings together nine rivers, all flowing into the Pacific. A thriving area consisting of Hoquiam, Aberdeen, and Cosmopolis, all the cities border picturesque Grays Harbor, the southern boundary of the Olympic Peninsula.

An area with its roots in timber, fishing and shipbuilding, these industries still thrive today. In addition to the traditional trades practiced in these seaside communities, Grays Harbor County is also home to the Ocean Spray Cranberry empire.

Day 1 Aberdeen, Hoquiam, and Westport:

While you're here soaking in the ambiance of the splendid Pacific Ocean, explore the city of Aberdeen. Full of fascinating points of interest, one you don't want to overlook is the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport. This historical shipyard is home to the honorary flagship of Washington State, The Lady Washington. Built in Aberdeen and launched in 1989, this full-scale replica is a full reproduction of the ship sailed by Captain Robert Gray, whom Grays County is named for.

Dockside tours are available for the Lady, as are scheduled sailing voyages. A popular attraction all over the coastal waters of the Pacific, the Lady occasionally ventures to Olympia, Seattle, and beyond, so be sure and call ahead before you make your plans. For information on tours and sailings, call 1-800-200-LADY.

Architectural buffs will enjoy the Historical Homes Walking Tour, where you can soak in the historical particulars of the beautiful Broadway Hill area. Pick up your tour books at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Information Center.

Another fun stop while you're in Aberdeen is the Aberdeen Museum. One of the highlights of this museum includes a miniature version of downtown Aberdeen before the devastating 1903 fire. Also on display are additional exhibits depicting early-day life on the coast.

Not to be left out of the fun, Hoquiam boasts its own charm and year round tourist attractions. Don't miss the Grays Harbor Farmers Market and Craft Fair. This event has the distinction of being only one of two Washington State farmers markets open all year. A favorite of both locals and day-trippers, the Market offers local produce, fresh baked pastries, ocean-caught seafood, arts and crafts, and delicious cuisine.

A national historical site, and the pride of Grays Harbor County, Hoquiam Castle is a happening not to be missed. Built in 1897 by timber mogul Robert Lytle, the Castle brought east coast civility and elegance to the rugged Pacific coast. Now a working Bed and Breakfast Inn, the Castle still offers guided tours.

Another museum of interest is the Polson Park and Museum, a restored 26-room mansion filled with antiques and history. Also included on-site are a gift shop, a breathtaking rose garden, and a picnic area.

While you're out and about soaking up the flavor of Grays Harbor County, do yourself a favor and

take the short hop down to the lovely oceanside village of Westport. Resting on the southwest tip of Grays Harbor, this community offers year round deep-sea fishing, whale watching and even surfing!

Come see the largest marina on the coast of Washington. A jaunty boardwalk runs alongside, offering a bird's-eye view of the busy ocean-faring sea traffic that flows in and out of the Harbor. Coney Island's got nothing on Westport; this boardwalk offers lots of fun-you can even fish off the side! Also available in the summertime are bumper boats, an aquarium, and a bustling arcade appealing to the young and the young at heart.

Don't miss the yearly migration of the Gray Whales as they make their way from the Baja to the Bering Sea each spring. Boating tours and museum classes are offered to maximize your experience. Call (360) 268-0078 for more information.

Day 2 Hoh Rain Forest and Lake Quinault:

In the heart of the magnificent Olympic Peninsula lies a resplendent natural wonder, the Hoh Rain Forest. One of the only temperate rain forests in the entirety of the northern hemisphere, its close proximity to the Pacific Ocean drenches this verdant spot with 150 inches of rain fall each year. The result is lush valleys, towering trees, and unbelievable sightseeing!

This fertile area calls hikers of all levels to its many paths, varying in length and intensity. The Hoh Rain Forest Visitor Center, located 19 miles off of Highway 101, has all the information you need for your adventure through the Forest, including trail maps.

Flanking the Visitor Center are trailheads for three easy-to-moderate hikes. The Hall of Mosses Trail is a .75 mile hike through the moss-draped maple trees. The Spruce Trail is 1.25 miles in length and follows along the Hoh River and showcases the red alders and maples. The third trail is a .25 mile "mini trail" catering to those guests in wheelchairs or who are pushing baby strollers.

The Visitor Center is also the launching pad for several extended and more taxing hikes leading through glacier fields and alpine meadows. While physically quite demanding, those able to take the hikes won't be disappointed by the breathtaking scenery that waits. Another pleasurable option is a Hoh River Float, available during the summer months.

Just an hour away from Hoquiam in beautiful and diverse Grays Harbor County lays the Quinault area, including Lake Quinault, in the temperate rain forest. Receiving a startling 12 feet of rain a year, this valley is burgeoning with verdant forest and soaring trees, including the world's largest Western Red Cedar, located off of Highway 101 near milepost 170, residing on the north shore of Lake Quinault.

A fun and time-wise opportunity for you while spending your day in Washington's own rain forest is a scenic 30-mile drive looping around the Lake, which takes you through river habitats and meanders through the forest.

For you hikers, check out the Maple Glade Rain Forest Trail, a leisurely .5 mile loop that begins and ends across the bridge from the Quinault Ranger Station. The one-mile looping Graves Creek Nature Trail begins at Graves Creek campground and also takes you through the rain forest. Other activities available in the summer months include guided nature walks, swimming, boating, and horseback riding. For weather conditions, call the Quinault Rain Forest Information Center at (360) 288-2644.

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